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THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH MEN.

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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT THE
Opening of a MEETING-HOUSE,

I N

MARSH-STREET, WALTHAMSTOW,

On WEDNESDAY, the 6th of JUNE, 1787:

AND AT THE

SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON-WALL,

Previous to the Dispensation of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,
June 24. 1787.

By HENRY HUNTER, D. D.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

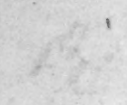
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THE TABERNACLE OF GOD WITH MEN.



A

S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE

Opening of a Meeting-house

IN

MARK STREET, WILKINSON

ON WEDNESDAY, 10th of June 1871

BY THE

REV. C. C. LONDON WILKINSON

Author of the last work



REV. C. C. LONDON WILKINSON

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T O

THOMAS FLETCHER, Esq.

S I R,

THE Meeting-house lately erected at Walthamstow owes its existence, and the prospect of its future support, in a great measure, to your munificence: and the following Sermon, preached on occasion of its being opened for the worship of God, owes its publication chiefly to your approbation of it, and to your desire of seeing it in print. Whoever takes the trouble to peruse the Sermon, will easily disco-

discover that it never could be intended for the public eye, but for a particular occasion, and the ear of private friendship. That friendship has greatly over-rated it's merit, and drawn it into light. Rather than appear ungrateful or affected, I have ventured to present from the press a hasty and very imperfect performance, of which it is impossible for any one to think more humbly than it's author.

You would, I am well assured, Sir, reckon yourself little indebted to me, for a compliment to your liberality, at the expence of your good neighbours and friends who have so generously co-operated with you in rearing this Edifice ;
and,

and, I am equally confident no one of them will consider it as a mark of disrespect, that your name and bounty alone, are distinguished in this address. They will rather approve, and rejoice in, the merited tribute which I feel myself bound to present, unsolicited, to age and virtue.

I am, Sir,
with the highest respect
and esteem,
Your obedient
humble servant,
HENRY HUNTER.

*Charles'-Square,
June 8, 1787.*

(VII)

and I am deeply conscious of
some of them. I consider it as a
mark of my guilt that your name
and name should be drawn
guilted in my works. I have
will not add to and rejoice
in the most of those which I
feel myself bound to picture as
loathed to the world.

I am, Sir,
with the most respectful
and sincere
Your obedient
servant

THOMAS HUNTER

Charles
June 8, 1787

to the
of the
of the

S E R M O N.

REV. XXI. 3, 4.

AND I HEARD A GREAT VOICE OUT OF HEAVEN,
SAYING, BEHOLD THE TABERNACLE OF GOD
IS WITH MEN, AND HE WILL DWELL WITH
THEM, AND THEY SHALL BE HIS PEOPLE,
AND GOD HIMSELF SHALL BE WITH THEM,
AND BE THEIR GOD. AND GOD SHALL WIPE
AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES; AND
THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, NEITHER
SORROW, NOR CRYING, NEITHER SHALL THERE
BE ANY MORE PAIN: FOR THE FORMER THINGS
ARE PASSED AWAY.

WHEN the haughty king of Ba-
bylon had completed the fortifi-
cation and embellishments of that great
city, his "heart was lifted up with pride;"
and pride is nigh unto destruction. Sur-

B

veying

veying with self-complacency the magnificence which he had reared, as “ he
 “ walked in the palace of the kingdom
 “ of Babylon,” he exultingly exclaims,
 “ Is not this great Babylon that I have
 “ built for the house of the kingdom,
 “ by the might of my power, and for
 “ the honour of my majesty?*” What
 “ high swelling words of vanity !” When
 lo, exalting himself into a god, he in a
 moment becomes less than a man. “ While
 “ the word was yet in his mouth,” the
 kingdom departs from him, he is de-
 prived of that reason which he had em-
 ployed to so little purpose, is driven, a
 spectacle of horror, from human society,
 ranks with and feeds like the beasts of
 the field ; and, with the first glimmering
 of restored understanding, is made to dis-
 cern and to acknowledge, “ that the
 “ Most High ruleth in the kingdom of
 “ men, and giveth it to whomsoever
 “ he will.”

* Dan. iv. 30—35.

What

What a different object is presented to us, in the person, spirit and behaviour of the wisest, greatest, and most splendid of princes, when he had finished, and when he dedicated the noblest structure that ever the sun beheld, on Mount Zion, the glory of the whole earth? Filled with an awful, overwhelming, humiliating sense of divine glory and majesty, he feels himself, and the temple which he had built, and all created glory, shrink into nothing; and thus he breathes the wonder, joy, and gratitude of his soul: “ But will God indeed dwell on the earth? — Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this house that I have builded? * ” — But, the lustre of a Solomon too was destined to pass away; the vast temple is doomed to destruction; the sceptre must depart from Judah and the glory from Israel. Even that solemn fabrick, constructed “ according to the pattern which God him-

* 1 Kings viii. 27.

" self shewed unto Moses in the mount,"
 has perished in the wreck of empire; all,
 all is lost and swallowed up in a kingdom
 which cannot be shaken, in majesty which
 cannot fade, in glory that shall never
 expire. Now, " if the ministration of
 " death, written and engraven in stones,
 " was glorious, so that the children of
 " Israel could not stedfastly behold the
 " face of Moses, for the glory of his
 " countenance, which glory was to be
 " done away; how shall not the minis-
 " tration of the spirit, be rather glorious?
 " For, if the ministration of condemna-
 " tion be glory, much more doth the
 " ministration of righteousness exceed in
 " glory. For even that which was made
 " glorious, had no glory in this respect,
 " by reason of the glory that excelleth.
 " For if that which is done away was
 " glorious, much more that which re-
 " maineth is glorious.*"

The splendour of our temples, Chris-
 tians, is not columns of marble, nor

* 2 Cor. iii. 7—11.

beams of cedar overlaid with gold; vestments adorned with all manner of precious stones, nor the perfumes of Arabia ascending in clouds to heaven. Such things as these please but the senses, and perish with the using. The glory in which we exult, is "God with us" in his word and ordinances. The support of humble roofs, such as this, is, living pillars established on the rock Christ; "epistles, "written not with ink, but with the "Spirit of the living God, not in tables "of stone, but in fleshly tables of the "heart;" offerings not consisting "of "thousands of rams and ten thousands "of rivers of oil," but the sacrifice of "praise and of a broken and contrite "spirit." Our wealth is the precious treasure of "the gospel, though laid up "in earthen vessels;" and our infallible instructor and guide, the great God, declaring his will, not by the mystery of Urim and Thummim; not by visions and voices; not by prophets from among ourselves, nor by angels from heaven; but by the Son of his love, "the brightness
" of

“ of his glory, and the express image of
 “ his person,” who “ is come to save
 “ that which was lost,” and who hath
 said, “ Lo, I am with you always, even
 “ unto the end of the world.” — And
 what is the musick of a thousand instru-
 ments, and of ten thousand voices in
 perfect accord, compared to this one
 single melodious note out of heaven,
 “ Behold the tabernacle of God is with
 “ men ?” “ Thus saith the high and lofty
 “ one, that inhabiteth eternity, whose
 “ name is holy : I dwell in the high and
 “ holy place ; with him also, that is of
 “ a contrite and humble spirit, to revive
 “ the spirit of the humble, and to revive
 “ the heart of the contrite ones.*”

The things chiefly discoursed of in this
 book, my friends, are the things which
 shall be revealed hereafter : the wonders
 of redeeming grace matured into glory ;
 the objects of faith realized ; those of
 hope attained and enjoyed. May it not,
 by the blessing of God, tend to assist that

* Is. lvii. 15.

faith,

faith, and to support that hope, to take an anticipated view of future bliss, under the several striking, eloquent and expressive images employed in the text, to unfold its nature, excellency and perfection?—And may that gracious Spirit who disclosed to the beloved disciple, in prophetick vision, these glories of Emmanuel's land, impress them deeply on our hearts, and make them daily to produce much good fruit in our lives; and cause them to prove a perpetual source of divine peace and holy joy. Amen.

And, first, The glad tidings of great joy are declared by “a voice,” “a great voice,” “a great voice out of heaven;” in accents clear, distinct and intelligible, in words that are tried, faithful and true.—They are ushered in by a solemn note of attention, of wonder, of congratulation and joy, “Behold.” We announce a mystery which angels desire to look into. We unfold a purpose of grace and condescension which passeth all understanding. We display a prospect of felicity to
which

which hope durst not have aspired, nor fancy have portrayed. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon you!"—"Behold" the fair inheritance which Christ has purchased for you! "Behold" the high dignity, the glorious privileges, the transcendent blessedness to which you are begotten, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his exaltation to the Father's right hand! "Behold" and wonder, and adore, and "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory!"

The important intelligence communicated to us, O children of men, is not the dictate of fond, flattering expectation, hastily cleaving to what it wishes may be true; nor the creature of a bold imagination, forming for itself an ideal world, a paradise of fools and sensualists. It is not the vague and uncertain rumour, which sometimes amuses, sometimes torments wretched mortals; devised by malice, propagated by folly, and believed by simplicity and credulity. It is not
the

the false and deceptive representation of glorious kingdoms which the father of lies sometimes expands, to mislead, delude, and then destroy his wretched votaries. It is not a voice from the grave, saying, O man, "dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return;" "the clods of the valley shall be sweet unto thee, and the worm shall feed upon thee;" "all flesh is as grass, and all the goodliness of man as the flower of the field." No, it is the trumpet which awakens the dead, the herald of immortality, the destroyer of him who hath the power of death; it is the decree of "Him who cannot lie," who holds out no false hope, who cannot be deceived, and will not deceive; who promises in love, and accomplishes in mercy and loving kindness: it is the gracious admonition of a father, the intimation of events certainly to come, of interests all-important, of privileges infallibly secured, of a felicity placed beyond the reach of accident; of "a kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world;" it is the testimony of "the Amen, the faithful

“and true Witness,” corresponding to the conclusions of reason and reflection; corresponding to the natural wishes, desires and hopes of the human mind; it is the plastic, energetic, vivifying power of the Eternal Spirit, giving a reality, a substance, a permanency, to the daring flights of raptured imagination, and calling into existence a fairer world than fancy itself can frame.

It is “a great voice out of heaven;” hear it, ye sons of light, and prostrate yourselves before the eternal throne; hear it, ye spirits of just men made perfect, for ye know, ye feel what it means; hear it, ye trembling prisoners of hope, for “the day of your redemption draweth nigh;”—hear it, ye who account a day spent in God’s house better than a thousand, and break forth into singing, in the transporting prospect of “being ever with the Lord.” It is a voice, not from Sinai, saying “stand afar off, come not nigh, break not through to gaze, lest thou
“perish;”

“ perish ;” but a voice from mount Zion, saying, “ Come up hither, and I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife ; “ I will lead thee by the pure river of “ water of life, which flows from the “ throne of God and the Lamb ;” “ I “ will conduct thee through the trees of “ life which grow in the midst of the “ paradise of God.” It is a voice which annihilates the distance between heaven and earth ; which exalts frail, fallen men to heavenly thrones, and brings down the placid Majesty of Heaven to tabernacle with guilty creatures, restored, reconciled, brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

The voice “ crieth from heaven ;” and what doth it cry ? “ Behold the tabernacle of God is with men.”—This image has an obvious reference to the purest and happiest periods of the Old Testament church, when Deity vouchsafed to reside among a chosen people, in sensible tokens of his presence and favour ; in a pillar of cloud and fire ; a shelter from sultry heat by day, a purifier of unwholesome air, and

a protector from hostile attack, by night ; the director of their motion and resting ; a perpetual monitor, a perpetual safeguard. It may have a reference to the *Schekinah*, or visible glory which dwelt between the cherubim, and thence emitted the hallowed oracles of the divine will. It was thus God distinguished the nation of his choice from every other people under heaven ; thus he pitched his tent amongst them, and rejoiced over them to do them good ; and it is thus that the heavenly vision represents the great Jehovah in a better world, in a more glorious church, residing in the midst of his redeemed, in “ a tabernacle that
 “ shall not be taken down ; not one of
 “ the stakes whereof shall ever be re-
 “ moved, neither shall any of the cords
 “ thereof be broken * ;” in tokens of his presence and affection still more conspicuous and more endearing. There, he was seen in a cloud darkly, in flaming fire that forbade an approach too near ; here,

* Is. xxxiii. 20.

he is seen "face to face," and the beholder is "transformed into the same image from glory to glory;" here, he pervades the immense whole, as a pure, purifying, inspiring, unconsuming fire of love. There he made known his will to many through the intervention of one, and that one "could not continue by reason of death," but was under the necessity of transmitting his power and privileges to another; but, in this world of bliss, all are "kings and priests unto God," all hear his voice, and see his face, and "his name is in their foreheads;"—all have access through one Spirit unto the Father; all "know as they are known;" all are glorious, all immortal.

The services of an earthly tabernacle were of necessity interrupted. Some were stated, some occasional; at best they had only "the shadow of good things to come;" but the worshippers in the heavenly tabernacle "cease not, day and night, saying holy, holy, holy is the Lord;"
they

they renew their labours without weariness and without end; they gather strength from exertion; they perceive, they enjoy the substance, the reality of what they once faintly comprehended, and hesitatingly believed; they feel and delight in an omnipresent God, making still some new discovery of his love; enlarging continually the sphere of knowledge, and therein the sphere of happiness.—“ The
 “ man whose eyes were opened ” to see
 “ Israel abiding in his tents ” according to their tribes, took up his parable and in rapture exclaimed, “ How goodly are thy
 “ tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles,
 “ O Israel! as the valleys are they spread
 “ forth, as gardens by the river’s side, as
 “ the trees of lign-aloes, which the
 “ Lord hath planted, and as cedar trees
 “ beside the waters *!” What will it be, from the summit of yonder eternal hills, to survey the happy plains, where the tabernacle of God rears its head, amidst the countless tents in which the myriads

* Numb. xxiv. 5, 6.

of the redeemed eternally repose !—Grant me to see it, good and gracious Spirit, not as Balaam did the plains of Moab where Israel encamped, with a malignant, envious, despairing eye ; not as Moses did from Pisgah, the land flowing with milk and honey, into which the stern interdict forbade him ever to enter ; but as Abraham, to whom God said, “ Arise, go through the land in the length and the breadth of it, for I will give it thee*.”

A new and beautiful image arises upon us, in the expression, “ and he will *dwell* “ with them.” The word imports, “ he “ will spread a covering over them, he “ will overshadow them.” The sweet idea of *home* is included in it ; the idea of permanency, of society, of mutual interest and affection. It represents a father residing in the midst of his children, under the roof which his paternal hand has expanded, around the table which his

* Gen. xiii. 17.

paternal care and love have furnished.— It represents brethren “ dwelling together “ in unity,” animated with one heart and one soul, employed in one service, enjoying one common felicity, aiming at one end.— In the happiest earthly families strife will arise. Children, as they grow up, must scatter and be dispersed. Anxiety, and fear, and sorrow, must mingle with, and mar parental and filial delights. Parents seldom know when and how to dissolve the harshness of authority, in the cordiality of friendship: children do not always understand how to blend filial submission and respect, with manly independence.—It is reserved for those blessed mansions to exhibit union, not liable to separation, “ perfect love that casteth out fear,” present enjoyment unclouded, unembittered by the prospect of evil to come; authority exercised in love, submission yielded with cheerfulness; friendship still growing, faculties still improving, prospects still brightening, bliss already perfect yet susceptible of, and still receiving increase.

At

At every stage of our earthly course, we feel the heart and the condition of a stranger; the sound is ever in our ears, "Arise ye and depart, for this is not your rest;" "here ye have no abiding city." In this world we may be rather said to lodge than to dwell, as way-faring men who tarry for a night, and in the morning must arise and go on their way: but in our "Father's house above are many mansions," a place prepared for us, that where "he is, there we may be also." They who have "attained unto the resurrection from the dead," "who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," "are continually before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

"God shall dwell among them!" Reflect for a moment on the pleasure you may have taken, in preparing for the reception of a friend; for the reception of a man of superiour rank, of superiour wisdom, of distinguished goodness, of illustrious

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reputation. Add to all those ideas, that of personal obligation, of favour unmerited, unexpected, seasonably, generously, graciously conferred. Reflect for a moment on the satisfaction you may have felt in seeing such an one under your roof, at your table; or in being the guest of such an one. Think on the heart-felt delight of living, of conversing, of acquiring wisdom, of adding to virtue, of multiplying felicity, in society so dear, so honourable, so improving; and when the whole soul is fired and filled with the thought of communications so pure, so sweet, so exalted—reflect on the blessedness of “eating bread in the kingdom of God,” “of sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,” of mingling with the men whom “the King delighteth to honour,” of pouring out every grateful emotion, every holy desire into the bosom of a father, and of hearing from the mouth of God, the delightful accents of love.

When

When friends meet after long separation, how numerous, how interesting, how grateful are the topics on which they have to converse ! The hardships which they have endured, the dangers they have escaped, the success wherewith they have been crowned, the wonders they have seen, the actions they have achieved, the plans which they have formed, the prospects which lie before them. — The conversation of that heavenly habitation rolls on nobler, loftier themes than the meagre annals of a transient life can furnish. All the glories of unbounded Nature, all the wonders of mysterious Providence, all the riches of redeeming Grace, swell upon the raptured eye, kindle in the heart, flow from the lips ; while [the prospect extends an immeasurable eternity, pregnant with still greater miracles of wisdom and love ; gradually disclosing a far more exceeding, an everlasting weight of glory," such as " eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive."

—But we desist from debasing the grandeur of the subject, by the poverty of our conception and expression ; we desist from “darkening counsel by words without knowledge.” O may it be given us at length to know by blessed experience what it is to *dwell* with God, and to have God *dwelling* in the midst of us ; not only to hear of it with the hearing of the ear, but to behold it with the seeing of the eye, and to occupy our place in “ the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world.”

Again, the voice out of heaven proclaims, “ and they shall be his people, “ and God himself shall be with them, “ and be their God.” The royal standard is erected, not in the heart of a conquered country, amidst millions of prostrate, vanquished slaves, who must bend the neck, and submit to the yoke which the stern victor may think fit to impose. This “tabernacle of God” is not reared in a field of blood, amidst the “ confused noise of the warrior,” the shrieks
of

of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. That celestial plain presents the triumph of divine benignity, the unstained laurels of all-subduing love. It presents the royal pavilion expanded in the midst of happy, favoured, flourishing, willing subjects; in each of whose welfare and honour the Sovereign condescends to take an interest, and to make it his own; and who all unite in every sentiment of loyalty, affection, gratitude and obedience.

“ They shall be *his* people,” according as it is written concerning the nation whom he chose, delivered out of Egypt and conducted into Canaan, “ ye shall be “ a peculiar treasure unto me, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation *.” These “ ransomed of the Lord” are *his* by yet tenderer, yet more powerful ties. Like every other creature, they are *his* by the right of creation and preservation. Like Israel of old, they are *his* by choice, by covenant,

* Ex. xix. 5, 6.

by promise ; but, under a nobler covenant, established upon “ better promises,” and of infinitely longer duration. They are *his* by redemption, redemption through blood ; *his* by cheerful, voluntary dedication and surrender ; *his* by similitude ; *his* by protection afforded, and allegiance reciprocally yielded ; *his* “ in the day when he “ maketh up his jewels.” The Lord their Redeemer is strong, and he hath said, “ I give unto them eternal life, and “ they shall never perish, neither shall any “ pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater “ than all ; and none is able to pluck “ them out of my Father’s hand *.” “ Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, “ and none of them is lost.”—“ Father, “ I will that they also whom thou hast “ given me, be with me where I am ; “ that they may behold my glory which “ thou hast given me †.”

* John x. 28, 29.

† John xvii.

“ And —

" And God himself shall be with them,
 " and be their God." How much is contained
 and conveyed in that emphatical "himself!"
 We see, we feel him in the glory of the
 meridian sun; we inhale him in the
 sweets which are wafted on the wings of
 the vernal breeze; we hear him in the
 roaring tempest, and the bursting thunder;
 we live upon him through all the vary-
 ing seasons of the circling year. But the
 genial sun and breathing spring; the win-
 tery storm and thundery cloud; the fertile
 earth and swelling sea, are not God
 " himself." They are the veil which he
 spreads over his invisible Majesty; the chan-
 nels in which his power and bounty flow;
 the vehicle in which he rides sublime;
 the external, sensible token of omnipre-
 sent, incomprehensible Divinity. But,
 O how many ways has God of communi-
 cating " himself " to his intelligent crea-
 tures! That sun shall cease to shine,
 these glorious orbs to revolve; we shall
 cease from conversing with him through
 the medium of sense and matter, of rea-
 son and scripture; " we shall be like him,
 " for

“ for we shall see him as he is.” Amazing discovery, all important change ! “ He shall be their God.” An idea how vast, how comprehensive ! Let imagination explore, accumulate, multiply the treasures of the earth and of the sea ; combine all the stores of wisdom and knowledge ; collect into one the various capacities, intelligences, attainments of men and angels, and say to any one, “ all this “ is thine,” and infinitely less is said, than this one, this little word expresses, “ The Lord is your God.” Power irresistible, wisdom all-comprehensive, purity immaculate, truth inviolate, goodness unconfined, duration that knows no period, perfection not liable to diminution or change. “ This God is our God “ for ever and ever, he will be our “ guide even unto death*.” All these “ things shall be dissolved ;” nevertheless, according to his promise, we look for “ new heavens and a new earth wherein “ dwelleth righteousness †, and he shall

* Ps. xlviii. 14.

† 2 Pet. iii. 13.

“ reign

“ reign for ever and ever; King of kings,
 “ and Lord of lords.”

The heavenly voice swells the description of future bliss, by an animated and affecting enumeration of the various plagues to which this life is subject, but which shall in no ways enter in, to disturb, diminish, or destroy the tranquillity and joy of those regions of purity and peace, where “ the wicked cease
 “ from troubling and the weary are at
 “ rest.” “ God shall wipe away all tears
 “ from their eyes; and there shall be no
 “ more death, neither sorrow, nor cry-
 “ ing; neither shall there be any more
 “ pain; for the former things are passed
 “ away.” Our conceptions of happiness in this world are languid and imperfect. Our liveliest idea of good, is, the absence of evil; of pleasure, that it is exemption from pain; of joy, that it is sorrow removed; of life, that it is the delay or suspension of death. These opposites are so united and blended in this world, that to think on the one, naturally suggests

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the thought of the other. In conformity, therefore, to an experience felt and understood by every descendent of him who tasted the forbidden tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the happiness of heaven is held up to our hopes, as the possession of all attainable good, and eternal deliverance from every kind and degree of evil. Reflect, O man, on all that is bitter in thy own lot, or grievous and discouraging in the world around thee; and suppose it totally and for ever done away; no infirmity of body, no anxiety of mind; no loss of friends, or loss of health, or loss of means; no deprivation or decay of faculties; no tormenting apprehension, or upbraiding conscience; no threatening disease, impending accident or yawning grave; no symptom of age; or warning of dissolution. They are for ever gone.

These are "the former things which have passed away," and if remembered at all, shall then be remembered only as a ground of triumph that they are no more;
and

and as a source of thankfulness to that gracious hand which has eternally removed them. In taking a retrospect of this valley of tears, and of his own path through it, from that bright eminence, the follower of the Lamb, shall rejoice and sing, " Vain, ensnaring world, I have
 " now escaped thee, escaped unhurt. Se-
 " ducing, lying spirit, I am far beyond
 " thy reach ; thy wiles can no longer
 " deceive me, nor thy terrours make me
 " afraid ; into this paradise of God, all
 " access is barred against thee. Frail,
 " vile corruptible body I left thee in
 " the grave," and " yet in my flesh I
 " see God." " Holy Father, I bless thy
 " name, who hast carried me safely
 " through all this scene of danger and
 " distress." " Thou hast delivered my
 " soul from death, mine eyes from tears,
 " my feet from falling." " Father, I
 " adore thy goodness in the trials which
 " I endured, as in the blessings which I
 " enjoyed ; they proceeded equally from
 " love. In mercy and in very faithful-
 " ness was I chastened : then, it was

“ not joyous but grievous,” but now it
 “ yields the peaceable fruits of righte-
 “ ousness.” “ I now see what once I
 “ could not believe, that all was work-
 “ ing together for my good. It is good
 “ for me that I have been afflicted. Blef-
 “ sed loss which discovered to me the
 “ vanity of the creature; blessed calamity
 “ which cured me of the deadly plague
 “ of sin; blessed tempest which drove
 “ me to my God. I reckon that the
 “ sufferings of the time past are not
 “ worthy to be compared with the glory
 “ now revealed. And all is of God,
 “ who has brought good out of evil,
 “ turned darkness into light, and the
 “ shadow of death into the morning.”

—Such reflections as these, I flatter my-
 self, will not be deemed altogether inap-
 plicable to the design of this day's meeting.
 Another little tabernacle is erected to the
 honour of God's name, and for the pur-
 pose of carrying on his publick worship.
 May God himself delight to dwell in it,
 and make it a “ Bethel, a house of God,
 “ and

“ and the gate of heaven” to its present inhabitants, and to many future generations.

The moment of a man's birth is the commencement of his progress towards death, and the perfecting of a structure, is but a step towards its decay. But, at the same time, the dark “ valley of the “ shadow of death” is the dawning of immortality; and the transitory, interrupted employments of a clay-built temple look directly forward to the worship of that temple whose “ gates are not “ shut at all by day,” and whose services are never concluded by the approach of night; for “ there is no night there.” The occasional visits which the Most High vouchsafes to make to the tabernacles of his grace, are intended for an admonition of his eternal residence among men, a preparation for that everlasting “ rest which remaineth for the people of “ God; a foretaste of those rivers of pleasure which flow at his right hand for “ evermore.”

That

That which constituted the glory of the second temple, which gave it an unrivalled superiority over the first, and eclipsed Solomon in all his glory, remains to be the ornament, the glory and strength of that which ye have built—the presence of God-Redeemer. “Wherever
 “two or three are gathered together in
 “my name, I am in the midst of them.”
 “Lo, I am with you always, even unto
 “the end of the world.” “Thus saith
 “the Amen, the faithful and true Wit-
 “ness; Behold I stand at the door and
 “knock; if any man hear my voice and
 “open the door, I will come in to him,
 “and sup with him, and he with me.”

Permit me, my friends, cordially to congratulate you on having brought this undertaking to so speedy, and so happy a conclusion. You have throughout discovered a spirit of moderation, of unity, of liberality, of candour, of perseverance, of honest zeal in what you deemed a good cause, that is highly to your credit. This house is not the child of contention
 and

and strife; it aims at the subversion of on institution, no interest, but that of satan's kingdom; it wishes to stand in the way of no man's fame, usefulness or emolument. The advancement of your own best interests; the improvement of your rising posterity in wisdom, in virtue, in piety; the enlargement and stability of a Mediator's kingdom are your great objects; and they are objects which, if you continue uprightly, diligently, and steadily to pursue, you cannot fail to attain. Prizing your own Christian liberty, standing fast in, and exercising it, you will not, you cannot be so unjust as to think of incroaching upon that of others. Fully persuaded in your own minds respecting the religious sentiments which you consider to be true and important, you will treat those who differ from you with candour, with tenderness, with respect. Happily united in your present views and pursuits, you will endeavour to "preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and, as far as in you lies, transmit it to those
 who

who may come after you. In finishing this edifice you have but begun your design; and in vain have you bestowed your attention, devoted your time, and contributed of your substance, to provide a place wherein to worship, unless you follow up the mighty purpose, by regular attendance, serious devotion, and real improvement. You will not content yourselves with the forms of godliness without the power; as you have not, like the Athenians, set up and inscribed an altar to the "Unknown God." All that has hitherto been done, is to lay up the materials for the spiritual building; it now remains that with one heart and one soul you apply them individually, and as a Christian society, to your personal and your mutual edification in the faith and hope, and love, and joy of the gospel of Christ. Your harmony hitherto is a happy presage of your future union in pursuing the great ends of your association, in fixing your choice of one who may "labour among you, and be over you in the Lord, and admonish you."

Your

Your wisdom, and moderation, and uprightness in this, as in every thing else, will I trust be made known unto all men. May he whose name is " Counsellor," direct you, and " give you understanding " in all things."

" I paint for eternity," said the celebrated artist of antiquity, in excuse for the anxiety which he discovered, and the care he employed in finishing his works. Consider yourselves as having built, as living and acting, as assembling and worshipping for eternity. As often as ye enter this solemn place, let the powers of the world that is to come; the great realities within the veil; at a distance, yet hoped for; believed in, though unseen, be ever present to your thoughts. You have been contemplating the glory of the Lord, as it is seen, and his presence, as it is enjoyed, in the sanctuary above; let not the impression ever be effaced: let it dwell in your hearts; let it be transmitted thence, and become holiness in all manner of conversation.

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We

We have attempted, in much weakness, to convey to you some idea of the blessedness of those, among whom God has planted a tabernacle never to be taken down, who see his face, and beholding it, "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." May the recollection of what you have seen and heard, and believed, accompany you through this scene of vanity and vexation of spirit, through the valley of the shadow of death, and after death is swallowed up of victory. Think, Christians, what it will be, after myriads of ages of bliss have been enjoyed in the presence of God and the Lamb, to call to remembrance the periods measured by time, and this year, and this day, and this cottage of clay, and this service, and these your fellow worshippers, united to you now and for ever in bonds, in labours of love, and to say, adoring, Ever glorious and blessed Lord, "Then and there we sat under thy shadow with delight, "and thy fruit was sweet unto our taste:" what we then trusted, we now behold; what we then expected, is now come;

what

what we then loved unseen, we much more love now that its hidden excellency is unfolded. What will it be, after innumerable revolutions spent in the love, service and fruition of God in yonder radiant temple!—long, long after a transitory world, and perishing employments have passed away, to call to remembrance the existence, the services, the Christian intercourse, the heavenly communications of this little spot, and to date from what was seen, heard, handled and tasted of the good word of life, within these walls, the commencement or the progress of the life of God in the soul!—What will it be, my young friends, to recollect after you are become men, nay, “perfect men “in Christ Jesus,” that here you sucked in “the sincere milk of the word;” that here you were first taught “to know the “only true God and Jesus Christ whom “he hath sent;” that here you learned to be wise and good, and useful in this world, and to prepare betimes for a better!

What will it be, my beloved brethren, to call to mind, from yonder lofty height, when all imperfection is for ever done away, to call to mind the useful instructions here delivered and understood; the necessary admonition and reproof faithfully administered, thankfully and meekly received; the tender and seasonable consolations carefully provided, gently applied, and cordially embraced! What will it be to him whom God may send to minister among you, and to all who may follow, till of this house also “not one stone be left above another;” when, shining as the brightness of the firmament among those who have turned many to righteousness, to say, “It was there and then, that God made me a spiritual father to this son, to that daughter. It was there and then, that God crowned my feeble labours with his blessing; alarmed that profligate, reclaimed that backslider, recalled that wanderer, comforted that mourner, edified that saint in his holy faith; and, Father! here I am, and the children whom thou hast given me;

“ me ; but not unto me, Lord, not unto
 “ me, but to thy holy name be the
 “ praise.”

And, may it not perhaps be remembered, at some period in the immeasurable day of eternity, that on such a day and time, brethren and friends in the best bonds, were called in Providence to put their feeble, trembling hands to the commencement of this good work, and that, through the blessing of heaven, their kind wishes, their humble prayers, and well-meant advices, were not altogether in vain.

Thus again to meet, to reflect, to rejoice, to adore, is all I *can* wish and pray for, to you, men, brethren, and fathers, and to myself.—God, of his infinite mercy, grant it to every one of us, for the sake of his dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen, Amen.

F I N I S.



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